NIKKI CRAFT ARCHIVAL PROJECT

3Com's "Simply Palm" Campaign

A Feminist Internet Action Against Sexist Advertising

ACTIONSPORN3COM-00 | April 1999

A mirrored "Simply Porn" billboard image circulated during the 1999 online response to 3Com's campaign.

What This Action Was

In April 1999, 3Com and Palm Computing promoted the new Palm V organizer through the "Simply Palm" campaign. The advertisements placed a Palm device against the body of a nude woman who was curled inward, with her knees drawn toward her chest and her head lowered. The campaign appeared in magazines and on billboards and quickly became part of a wider public argument about Silicon Valley's use of women's bodies to sell technology.

Nikki Craft responded with an early web-based feminist political action. Her page, "3Com Gives New Meaning to Palm Pilot," published a public letter to 3Com marketing director Liz Brooking, challenged the company's defense of the campaign as "tasteful" and "elegant," documented 3Com's legal threats against online parody, linked readers to feminist and media responses, and invited direct protest to the company. A variation of Craft's letter was submitted to the San Francisco Examiner, national newspapers, women's organizations, and activist websites.

> “Her face disappears, but more than her face disappears: her personhood is erased. The bowed head, folded body, and offering hands evoke defeat and servitude.”
>
> *- Nikki Craft, 2026 archival note*

The Image and the Male Gaze

The woman in the advertisement is not presented as a person using technology. Her face is largely hidden, but more than her face disappears: the image erases her personhood. Her body is compressed into a crouch, her head is bowed, and she is not looking at the Palm device. The viewer is invited to look at her rather than to identify with her as a user, thinker, or participant in the technological world. The Palm V becomes the active subject of the advertisement while the woman is reduced to the surface on which the corporation displays it.

There is also a strong visual language of servitude in the pose. Her lowered head and folded body suggest defeat, while her hands appear to offer or present the device. She looks less like a customer holding a tool than a captive made to bear and display a corporate object. To Nikki Craft, the posture evokes a defeated torture victim. That is an interpretation of the image rather than a claim about the advertiser's stated intention, but it arises directly from the arrangement of the body: identity suppressed, agency removed, and the product elevated above the person.

A 2026 Reflection

Reflecting on the image in 2026, Nikki Craft wrote:

> *"Posing as art, the advertisement draws upon the visual language of slavery and servitude. The woman's identity is erased; her bowed body and offering hands exist to elevate the corporation's device. It is an image delivered from the social world I now think of as the Epstein class—a protected culture of wealth and male power in which women's personhood disappears and their bodies become objects of use. Anyone who claimed not to understand that imagery then should understand it now."*

The National and Online Reaction

The reaction was not confined to one website. Women working in technology publicly criticized the campaign as demeaning. Santa Clara County's transportation agency reportedly refused to place the advertisements at bus stops because they were too revealing. Web designer Jason Kottke created a series of "Simply Porn" parodies; after a 3Com lawyer demanded their removal, copies spread to mirror sites and the dispute was covered by Salon, the San Francisco Examiner, Forbes, Wired, and technology publications. The company's effort to suppress the parody became part of the story and helped distribute it more widely.

No reliable evidence has been located showing that the controversy caused a measurable loss in Palm V sales or a specific financial injury to 3Com. The documented impact was public, cultural, and reputational: the campaign became a nationally discussed example of sexist technology advertising, online parody, corporate legal pressure, and the difficulty of controlling criticism once it circulated through the web. A 2002 Forbes retrospective later used the episode as an example of how institutional attempts to suppress networked dissent can magnify it, and later academic writing continued to analyze the campaign's use of a faceless nude female body to market handheld technology.

An Early Feminist Web Action

The original page first appeared through the Institute for Global Communications (IGC), at an IGC/APC address preserved in the webpage capture. IGC grew from PeaceNet and EcoNet and was a pioneering progressive communications network, Internet service provider, and early web host for activists and nonprofit organizations. The placement of this action on IGC is historically significant: the page was not merely a digital copy of a printed letter. It used the early web as an organizing tool, linking feminist commentary, parody, press coverage, correspondence, and direct action against a corporation.

The exact day the page first went online has not yet been established. The action is dated April 1999 because the page refers to the April 1999 controversy and to the San Francisco Examiner coverage published April 8. It was among Nikki Craft's earliest websites and may have been among her earliest political actions conducted through the web, but no claim that it was the first should be made until the chronology of her early sites is checked.

Original Webpage and Preservation Note

Original webpage, maintained at No Status Quo for archival purposes: 3Com Gives New Meaning to "Palm Pilot"

The surviving webpage also records its earlier IGC address: http://www.igc.apc.org/nemesis/ACLU/Porn/3Compalm.html. That historical address is included as evidence of the page's original location; it may no longer function.

The companion PDF in this series has been preserved without editing. It contains two PDF pages, but its printed footer identifies them as pages 1 of 3 and 2 of 3, and the second page ends in the middle of 3Com's reply. This suggests that the print-to-PDF capture may be incomplete. The linked original webpage should therefore be consulted when the complete text is needed.

Files in This Section

ACTIONSPORN3COM-00: This overview places the action in its 1999 advertising, feminist, internet, and media context.

ACTIONSPORN3COM-01: The preserved PDF of Nikki Craft's original webpage, "3Com Gives Whole New Meaning to Palm Pilot," accompanied by its source image and metadata.

Companion Primary-Source Links

Original webpage PDF: ACTIONSPORN3COM-01-3Com-Gives-Whole-New-Meaning-to-Palm-Pilot-Original-Webpage-Capture-1999.pdf

Original webpage maintained online for archival purposes: 3Com Gives New Meaning to "Palm Pilot"

Sources and Related Resources

- Original Nikki Craft webpage - archival copy at No Status Quo
- "Networks for Rebels," Forbes ASAP, October 7, 2002
- Matt Beer, "Simply controversial," SFGATE, April 8, 1999
- Institute for Global Communications - progressive network history

---

Collaboration Note: Written by Nikki Craft with research, analysis, structural development, and editorial collaboration by Quillgenie (ChatGPT). The historical record, political interpretation, and final authorship are Nikki Craft's.